



*Like Joseph Smith,
you can learn that
the Lord will help
and strengthen you
as you rely on Him.*

YOU DON'T



HAVE TO BE PERFECT TO DO GOD'S WORK

By **Bentlee Rice**
Church Magazines

Have you ever said something to a sibling or friend that you regret? Or laughed at a joke that wasn't kind or clean? Or maybe kept watching a movie a little longer than you knew you should have?

Later, the situation pops into your head. You feel guilty about it, so you kneel to talk to God about the mistakes you've made, asking for forgiveness and then feeling God's love.

If this seems familiar, consider what we can learn about overcoming weakness from an experience the Prophet Joseph Smith had when he was 17.



About three years after the First Vision, Joseph found that he “frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth” and “was guilty of levity” (Joseph Smith—History 1:28). He recognized that he had sinned against God, and as someone who had been called by God, he knew he needed to be better. Joseph “felt condemned for [his] weakness and imperfections” (Joseph Smith—History 1:29), so one night he knelt down to pray and plead for forgiveness.

While Joseph was praying, Moroni appeared in Joseph's room and told him about the gold plates. The visits from Moroni prepared Joseph to get the plates and translate the Book of Mormon.

Even though Joseph was not perfect, he was still worthy to be called by God to help restore the gospel. Joseph maintained that worthiness to do God's work by repenting whenever he made mistakes.

All of us have given in to temptation at times; none of us is perfect. We have weaknesses and make mistakes. But we can follow Joseph's example of turning to the Lord. You don't need to be perfect to do God's work, but you do need to repent so you can be worthy.

GOD WANTS YOU TO REPENT

Heavenly Father wants all of us to grow spiritually so that we can become more like Him. Even after being called as a prophet, Joseph continued to learn and grow spiritually.

For example, when Martin Harris asked Joseph to ask the Lord if Martin could take 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript to show his family, Joseph was told no. But Martin kept asking, and Joseph kept asking, and they were eventually allowed to go ahead, under strict commandments. Martin did not keep these commandments and as a result lost those 116 pages. Joseph and Martin were devastated. They had to face the consequences of not obeying God.

The Lord took the plates from Joseph and told him he needed to repent if he was to translate again (see Doctrine and Covenants 3). Joseph humbled himself and sought the Lord's forgiveness.

After some time, the Lord told Joseph that he could continue translating the Book of Mormon as long as he was faithful.



ALL IS LOST, BY KWANI POVI WINDER

Joseph Smith's parents comfort him after he lost the 116 manuscript pages.



This experience helped Joseph learn to fear God more than man (see Doctrine and Covenants 3:7), to trust the revelation he was receiving, and to repent quickly when he made mistakes.

Joseph's example shows that repentance enables us to find peace and allows us to progress. While Joseph was distraught over losing the manuscript pages, he found hope in repenting and turning to the Lord. As a result, he was able to gain forgiveness and continue serving in God's work. We too make mistakes, sin, and must suffer the consequences of our actions. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we too can become clean from our sins and continue to serve in the Lord's work.



GOD WILL STRENGTHEN YOUR WEAKNESSES

In addition to relying on the Atonement of Jesus Christ and seeking forgiveness of sins, Joseph turned to the Lord for strength to overcome weaknesses that made it difficult to do the Lord's work. For instance, he was not educated, which was a constant reminder that he needed to rely on the Lord as he translated the Book of Mormon.

God did not intend for Joseph to translate the Book of Mormon on his own, so He provided Joseph with the Urim and Thummim (see Joseph Smith—History 1:35), and the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God (see Doctrine and Covenants 135:3). He also had people to help him, like his wife Emma, Martin Harris, and Oliver Cowdery, who would write as Joseph translated. With the Lord's help, Joseph was able to translate the entire Book of Mormon more quickly than an educated and experienced translator would have been able to. Even today, with experienced translators and

technology, the translation process takes a lot longer than it took Joseph Smith.

Imperfect people with weaknesses do the Lord's work every day, but they don't have to work alone. We all have weaknesses and make mistakes, but the Lord will help you as you rely on Him like Joseph did. Maybe you're struggling to understand the scriptures, be honest in all you do, or find kind words for a sibling. The Lord will help you through challenges you face.

The Lord has a plan for you, and He will not leave you alone. Just as He helped Joseph, He will help you by sending people to support you along your journey. He has given you tools to succeed—from scriptures, where you can learn of God's love, to parents, good friends, local Church leaders, apostles, and prophets.

We also have the example of Joseph Smith, who can teach us how to follow Jesus Christ, repent, and gain confidence and strength to do God's work. **NE**